

Bird Seed

There is a staggering variety of bird seeds and mixtures on the market today. In most locations, however, the best all-around seed is black-oil sunflower seed or sunflower seed hearts. This seed is high in fat and its small size and thin shell (or absence of shell) makes it easy for small birds to handle. Start with the sunflower seeds, and then experiment with other seeds and mixtures. Mixtures with corn, millet or milo are especially appreciated by ground feeding birds such as Sparrows, Juncos, Spotted Towhees, Jays, Pigeons and Doves.

Suet

Suet is a great choice for attracting many birds such as Nuthatches, Chickadees, Bushtits, and especially Woodpeckers. Suet can be purchased as processed cakes that include seeds, berries, insects and other ingredients. It can also be purchased as kidney suet from a meat counter. If you offer suet in hot weather, look for varieties that have been processed specifically for heat.

Nectar

Nectar is sugar water that is used to attract hummingbirds and is made by dissolving sugar in water (1 part sugar to 4 parts boiling water). After it has cooled, nectar can be stored in the refrigerator for up to one week. It is important to change nectar every 3-5 days to prevent mold. Do not add red food color to nectar as it is unnecessary and could possibly be harmful. Never use honey or artificial sweeteners. Nectar is especially desirable as a winter supplement in the Pacific Northwest as it will attract Anna's Hummingbird. Anna's is a native hummingbird which remains in the area year round and in winter has very few natural nectar sources.

Other Foods

Birds will also eat a variety of other foods. Be imaginative and try peanut hearts, plain popcorn, bread, and fruits such as cut oranges, apples, grapes and soaked raisins. Additionally, mealworms can be purchased in early spring through summer and are a good supply of protein.

Water

Birds are attracted to water for drinking and bathing. Provide a shallow dish or 'bath' with stones or branches in the water for birds to stand on them to keep their feet dry in winter especially. Change water regularly to keep it fresh and clean. Birds particularly love a water source that is a constant drip.

Bird Feeding Tips

Store food in a cool, dry place such as a metal garbage can which will deter critters. When placing feeders, choose a quiet place (preferably out of strong winds) where you can enjoy watching and refilling is easy. To attract birds, the feeder should be close to natural cover (trees or shrubs upon which the birds can perch to 'wait their turn'). Remember to landscape your home with shrubs, trees and flowers that provide natural food in the form of seeds and berries.